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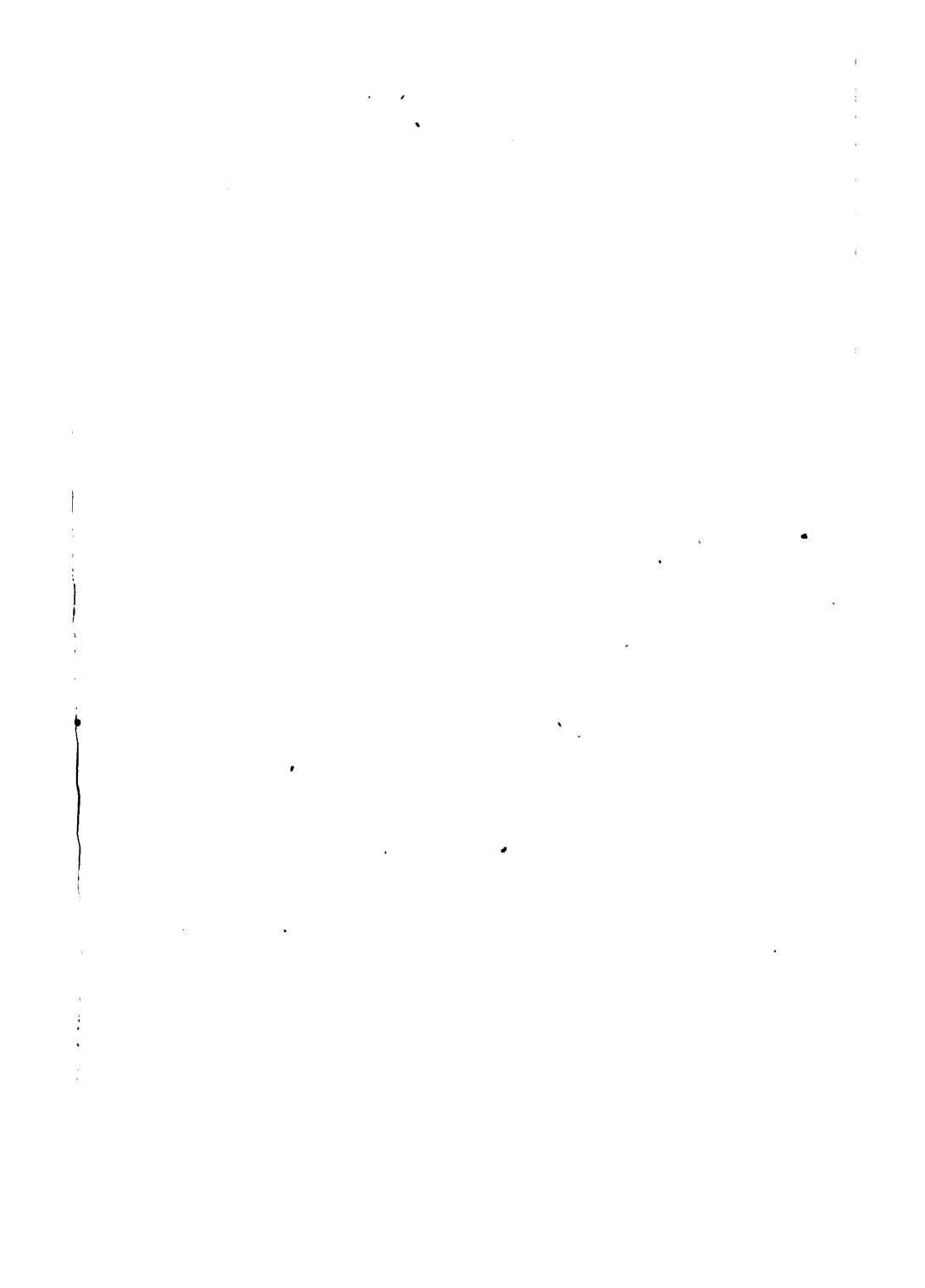
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Whitwell Memorial.



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FOUR SERMONS

ON OCCASION OF THE CONSECRATION

OF

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S CHURCH,

WHITWELL, YORK,

AUGUST 21ST. 1860.

PREACHED ON THE DAY OF CONSECRATION

AND THE SUNDAY AFTER,

BY

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

THE REV. FREDERICK WATKINS, M.A.

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

THE REV. DOLBEN PAUL, B.A.

CURATE OF SIBBERTOFT.

THE REV. F. DIGBY LEGARD, B.A.

INCUMBENT.

LONDON:

J. AND C. MOZLEY, 6, PATERNOSTER ROW;

YORK: JOHN SAMPSON.

1861.

100. g. B.



Memorial of Abithwell.



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PREFACE.

THE little village of Whitwell-on-the-Hill, comprising the small population of two hundred souls, is situate in the North Riding of the county of York, on the first sloping ground that rises out of the dead level of the plain of York, distant about twelve miles from that city on the Scarborough road. It is said to derive its name from the singular milk-like colour of the water of a well, now covered over, in front of the Hall.

Whitwell was formerly Church property,

and formed part of the possessions of Kirkham Priory, to which, prior to its dissolution, it yielded the annual sum of £26 4s. 8d. It is said to have been one of the favourite estates of the Augustine monks resident at Kirkham; and the dry bed of a fish pool dug by them is still pointed out, near the brow of the hill, leading down to the valley of the Derwent, which separates Whitwell from the Kirkham territory. An old stone bridge which crosses the river, is still the scene of an annual bird fair, held on every Trinity Monday. The license was granted by the monks to their faithful Whitwell and Kirkham tenants; and the ancient grant is still maintained on the anniversary of the day, the fair beginning before daybreak and lasting till about six a. m., though the pure white doves and pigeons formerly brought and sold there, as a meet offering to our "Ladie," have degenerated into

a motley assemblage of owls, jackdaws, chaffinches, &c.

After the breaking up of the Priory at the time of the Reformation, the monks were dispersed, divine service discontinued, all spiritual care ceased, and the two parishes became extra-parochial, without church or minister, the inhabitants being obliged to resort to the neighbouring village of Cranbourne, now commonly called Crambe. But in the year 1845 a private chapel was fitted up at the Hall by Mr. Arthur Stephens, and licensed by the Archbishop for divine service.

On the 6th of October, 1858, the first stone of a new church, dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, was laid, a week after her marriage, by the present Lady Lechmere—to the glory of God, and in pious fulfilment of a wish of her late father, who owned the Whitwell estate.

The church is remarkably well situated,

and commands a lovely and extensive view. The windings of the river below are plainly marked by the soft and full-foliaged woods of Kirkham and Howsham ; broken here and there by sunny slopes of meadow land or golden corn-fields, and these in turn succeeded by the more distant outline of our miniature mountains, the dark blue Wolds. From the upper windows of the spire, there is a grand and unrivalled panorama spread out. It extends eastward to wild moors above Whitby and Scarborough—to the Hambleton Hills, and the rugged outline of Rolleston Scar on the north. The nearer ruins of Sheriff Hutton Castle are backed by a faint outline of the Wensleydale Hills ; further west rise Brimham Craggs above Harrogate, and the opening into Wharfedale. York Minster of course towers like a monarch over every object in the plain, and the central and two western towers are clearly distinguished by the eye.

On the south-east the church of Holme-on-the-Hill, Sidney Smith's "visible church on earth," and on a very clear day the cliffs of the north corner of Lincolnshire overhanging the junction of the Ouse and Trent, may be detected by a practised eye.

The plans for the church itself were furnished by G. E. Street, Esq., F.S.A. It is pure geometric Gothic in style, and consists of a nave and chancel eighty feet long. On the south side, at the intersection of the nave and chancel, rises a very handsome tower surmounted by a broached spire, one hundred and thirteen feet in height, containing a peal of six very rich-toned bells, cast by Messrs. Warner of London. The weight of the tenor bell is 13 *cwt.* There is an inscription on the bells which runs as follows :—

1. Father, glory be to Thee,
2. Glory to the blessed Son,
3. Glory to the Spirit be ;

4. Glory to the Three in One.
5. As it was, is now, shall be,
6. Filling all eternity.

The roof is timbered and high pitched, and covered with red tiles. The floor of the whole church is covered with Minton's encaustic tiles; and a "dado" of the same material is raised in the interior, about five feet high, surmounted by a string-course, and continued all round the church—it gives a character and warm appearance to the side walls.

The font stands at the extremity of the nave; it rests on a square base of red Mansfield stone, and is supported by four Derbyshire marble columns. The material of the font itself is Caen stone, inlaid with discs of alabaster and richly-coloured marbles and spars. The pulpit is also of Caen stone, inlaid after the same manner as the font. The desk of it rests on a slender column of marble, springing from a curiously

carved figure, which is meant to represent the demon of Infidelity, and by its crouching attitude and look of suffering appears to be crushed beneath the Word of God's truth, expounded from the pulpit above.

The Lectern is of oak, carved in the form of a pelican, on whose outstretched wings the Bible is placed. The bird is in the act of pecking at her breast to feed her young with her own blood, and has thus from very early Christian ages been considered as an appropriate emblem of our Blessed Saviour, Who shed His blood for man.

The tiling of the floor is proportionably richer as you approach the east end. Two steps divide the nave from the chancel, which is seated with oak stalls on each side to contain the choir; at the end of one of the seats is the prayer desk for the clergyman. The Communion rails are brass; and

are made portable so as to be placed round the font on the occasion of a Baptism.

The Reredos is an exquisite work of art—carved arcades on either side, of Mansfield stone; and in the centre, on a groundwork of diapered alabaster, is placed a Greek cross of dark red Languedoc marble. Upon this is suspended a delicately carved crown of thorns of pink alabaster. Various other marbles are used in the design—Galway green marble, Devonshire red, Rouge Royal, and Derbyshire spars. Beneath the Reredos and immediately above the Communion Table is engraved in old English characters the words, “By Thy Cross and Passion, good Lord, deliver us.”

Over the Reredos is the east window, erected by Sir Edmond Lechmere as a memorial of his wife's late father and grandfather. It is executed by Messrs. Clayton and Bell, and is composed of three lights, the centre representing the Crucifixion; the

two side lights contain on the one side figures of the Blessed Virgin and the two Marys, on the other the Apostle St. John, Joseph of Arimathea with his box of embalming ointment, and a Roman centurion.

The two remaining chancel windows are by Messrs. Wailes of Newcastle, and were presented to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Stephens of Foston Hall. The north one represents the Annunciation, and the scene of the Nativity in the manger at Bethlehem. The south one the Resurrection and the Ascension. The figure of our Lord in these two latter subjects is remarkably well drawn, and the face is most touchingly gentle and divine. The west window, also by Messrs. Wailes, was erected by the generous efforts of the tenants on the Whitwell estate, in token of their esteem for the foundress: the four lights contain figures of the four Evangelists, and the emblems of each. The whole church is

seated with open benches of solid oak. Beneath the tower is placed a small but sweet-toned organ, built by Willis, with one row of keys reaching from C to F, four and a half octaves, two more with the pedals; and seven stops. A porch on the south side, and a vestry on the north, complete the description of the church, which will hold about one hundred and fifty people.

The public high road goes along the western wall, and the churchyard is entered by a massive lych-gate—an ancient resting-place for the coffin, and where mourners waited till the clergyman came out to meet the corpse, (lych being an old Saxon word for corpse.)

The sun shone bright and warm on the 21st of August, 1860, when a procession of school children and surpliced clergy wound along the little village street, preceding his Grace the Archbishop, who was to consecrate this church, the first since his

accession to the diocese. An overwhelming congregation had already filled the church. At the lych-gate the petition for consecration was read by the foundress—and the necessary instruments being signed, the incumbent proceeded with the service for the day—the sermon was preached by the Archbishop—and thus the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Whitwell, was opened and solemnly set apart for ever to the service of God.

The most striking part of the ceremony was the consecration of the churchyard, when the Archbishop, followed by his train of clergy, marched slowly round the precincts reciting the appointed psalm.

Various festivities for high and low followed—and an evening service at half-past seven collected together a goodly congregation. Kelle's evening hymn, "Sun of my soul," sung after the sermon, seemed an appropriate and solemn ending to so solemn

a day; and many, we trust, would go home with a silent prayer for the health and welfare of the young foundress and her husband, and thanking God that He had "put it into the heart of His servant" to make so noble a use of high position and worldly riches.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HIS CHURCH.

S E R M O N

BY

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK,

AUGUST 21ST, 1860.

Morning.

SERMON I.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HIS CHURCH.

GENESIS, xxviii. 16.

*“And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said,
Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.”*

THE circumstances in which Jacob was placed SERMON
when he uttered these words, were such as would I.
naturally inspire feelings of solemnity. He had
just parted from his parents, and had received the
blessing of his aged father, as he set out upon his
solitary journey to seek his fortune in a distant
land. His lot as a traveller was not one of ease
and luxury; for he had nothing but the hard
ground for his couch, and for his pillow the stones
which he could gather from the wild country
through which his path lay. But great was the

SERMON honour, and glorious was the vision, that awaited

I. him as he thus lay down in that place to rest. As he dreamed, when the deep sleep had fallen upon him, behold, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, the Angels of God ascending and descending upon it, the Lord Jehovah Himself standing above it, promising that the land on which he was lying should belong to him, his children who were to become countless as the dust of the earth: that God would be with him, and keep him whithersoever he went, and bring him back in safety to the home he had left. The vision is at an end; the dreamer awakes, and discovers that, unworthy as that spot might seem of such a Presence, the Lord of Hosts had of a truth been there. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not: this is none other but the House of God." This almost incredulous surprise of the patriarch is often shown by others, as well as by himself, under the like circumstances. Men are tempted to doubt and to disbelieve that God does ever deign to dwell in one place rather than in another, and manifest Himself more to His people at one moment than He is wont to do at another.

"But will God indeed," was the question of SERMON
Solomon when he was dedicating the splendid I.
edifice that he had erected; "dwell on the earth?"
shall He inherit a temple made with hands?
"Behold, the Heaven of heavens cannot contain
Him, how much less this house that I have
builded!" And it is this, among other reasons,
that begets this indifference and irreverence that is
not unfrequently observed in congregations assembled
for worship within our churches. Now the
whole service of Consecration, which has this day
been celebrated, proceeds upon this truth, proceeds
upon the belief of the Presence of God in holy
places specially dedicated to Him, and set apart
to His honour and service. The opening Psalm
presumes it—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the
King of Glory shall come in,"—for it thus be-
speaks His entrance into this His temple. When
in the after service we repeat the language of the
Eighty-fourth Psalm—"Oh, how amiable are Thy
dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts!" and of the
Hundred and Twenty-second Psalm—"I was glad
when they said unto me, I will go into the

SERMON House of the Lord,"—we call the consecrated

- I. building "His habitation, and the place where His honour dwelleth." The Lesson, too, commemorating the dedication of Solomon's Temple, impresses the same truth upon our minds, and bids us remember the sanctity of the ground on which we tread, by reason of that Presence, and warns us to keep our foot "when we go to the House of God, that we be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." Suffer me then, dear Brethren, to address to you the word of exhortation on this subject, and to point out to you, first, the proper disposition for going into the House of the Lord; secondly, the proper disposition for listening to the Word when we are in it.

First. Now, it will be acknowledged by us all that the distinction between the nominal and the real Christian consists, not so much in the *acts* they each perform, as in the *spirit* in which they perform them: and perhaps there is no act in which these characters so frequently unite, as in the outward act of frequenting the House of God. Yet what a multiplicity of motives may be combined to draw any given congregation together!—

the force of custom, the fear of the displeasure of superiors, the love of seeing and being seen, escape from the dullness of being left at home, on the one hand; on the other, love to God, and an earnest desire to profit by the means of grace there held forth. It is evident that at no period of our history were there ever so many churches in our land, at no period so many worshippers in our churches; but do the members who give themselves heartily to do God's *work* and *will* multiply in proportion? Does an earnest devotion to the service of Christ, and the salvation of their own souls, grow and increase in the like proportion? If not, where lies the fault? I dare not say that our preachers are blameless in this matter, and that they might not press the word of life and the word of death home to the consciences of their people with more force and fervour. But, on the other hand, what can the preacher hope to do with the hearts and consciences of his hearers, unless they be in some way *prepared* to receive the Word?—as little as the husbandman who casts his seed on the hard beaten path can hope to reap a fruitful harvest in

SERMON due season. One main hindrance to our success,

- I. then, is the want of proper disposition on the part of the worshipper; (1) and the first necessary disposition is a real desire that his going to the House of the Lord may profit him. This desire should be cherished before we cross its threshold, by prayer to the Father of Light that He will give us the spirit of grace and supplication; that He will grant us the listening ear and the willing heart; that He will make His Word powerful for the conversion of the impenitent, and for the comfort of the penitent; that He will quicken our dullness and insensibility to truths already heard; that the impressions we receive under the Word read and preached may be abiding, and bring forth fruit unto everlasting life; that He will give to *us* his ministers such wisdom and zeal, such abundant gifts of the Spirit, that we may never speak in vain; that He will impart to the soul of every preacher the true love for the heavenly truths which He puts into their mouths; and that He will render us indifferent to your praises and censure, so we may but profit your souls; and that our love for the souls of our flocks, and our

efforts for their salvation, may make up for our **SERMON** lack of talent. I need scarcely remind you of the **I.** solemn purification which the Israelites were commanded to observe before they were permitted to listen to the Law delivered from Mount Sinai. Is a truly spiritual frame of mind less necessary under a covenant in which spiritual worship is deemed the great essential, even to the discouragement rather of the ceremonial? And if we come with minds unsanctified, riveted to the world, instead of being influenced by a principle of truth and love and willing obedience, how can the bending of our steps towards the House of God be called with truth a religious act at all?

(2.) To this first disposition, then, that we truly desire to profit by the means of grace there afforded, should succeed (2) a feeling of sorrow and humiliation that they have profited us so little in times past. I fear that in every congregation there are many whose consciences will testify that their hearts have sometimes been touched to the quick by a sermon, and that they have left the church anxious to forget the impression it has made, and to defeat its purpose of turning them

SERMON from some cherished sin. Let us think again how

- I. many good resolutions we have formed under the teaching of the Word, which have never had any good issue—resolutions launched, it is true, fairly and freely—but soon shipwrecked against the first rock of temptation that lay in its course. Surely we cannot sit easy under the remembrance of such short-comings and back-slidings; and to those who are visited by such convictions, these questions may well occur: “Am I going to hear the Word of God as a sentence that will condemn me, or as a truth which will make me free? Often have I heard from the lips of Christ’s minister and steward that the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost: has this truth led me to greater purity of life? Often have I heard that I must pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand, if they offend me: has this led me to be resolute in cutting myself off from sin and from sinners? May not God at length be weary of addressing by His Holy Spirit a heart which is ever touched but never turned by His influence? and may He not punish my abuse of this privilege by depriving it of that force which

it still seems to have, in inviting and urging me SERMON
to repentance?" Again: some of our hearers are I.
almost afraid of hearing, lest they should lose that
false peace in which they now indulge. They are
afraid that those silken cords of forbidden pleasure
which bind them will be loosened; they hug the
fetters of sin by which they are enthralled, and
would fain not have them broken; they turn away
their eyes from the Light that would disturb their
slumbers, and awaken them to a true sense of
their danger; they hedge themselves round against
the power of the Word, and try to blunt its edge
when it begins to prick the conscience. If such
has ever been thy case, then let thy sorrow for
such stubborn and wilful resistance to the Will
and Word of God lead thee constantly hither
to confess thy trespass, and to seek its *pardon*,
through Christ's atoning Blood.

(3.) Another feeling which should prevail with
us in turning our feet towards the House of God,
is thankfulness to Him that His Word is still pre-
served to us. The most awful chastisement with
which God used of old to visit His people was to
afflict them with "a famine of His Word." "Be-

SERMON hold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I

- I. will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord: they shall run to and fro, and seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it." And not only did He in fulfilment of this warning, raise no true prophet in Israel; but He permitted false teachers in later days to arise, who led them to wander far from the track, and to harden their hearts against the preaching of Christ crucified. May we ever be thankful, then, that in the Church of which we are members, the pure Word of God is still preached, and the Sacraments of Christ are duly administered: let us be thankful that we have not been led astray either by those blind guides who would teach us that there is no efficacy in the atoning Blood of Christ, and would rob us of the Gospel of Life and Peace; or by such as deny the doctrine of One only Mediator between God and man, set the Virgin Mary in the place of Christ, and make every Saint an Intercessor of equal power with Him. There was a day, in this our island, after its first conversion to Christianity, when Pagan idolaters once more overran it, and

destroyed the Churches of Christ in Britain, that **SERMON**
had been founded by the piety of early British I.
Christians. Many too, are the churches in Asia
and Africa, once the seat either of Apostles them-
selves or of some of the most distinguished Fathers
of the Church, which we now see trodden down
of the Gentiles; and even in our own Europe,
the noble church in which the holy Chrysostom
preached at Constantinople, is turned into a Turkish
mosque, in which the false prophet Mahomet is
honoured instead of Christ.

Let us come, then, when we bend our steps to-
wards the House of the Lord, in a spirit of thank-
fulness that the pure Word of God is still preached
to us; let us not think lightly of the privilege of
still hearing it, lest our too lightly esteeming it
should provoke the Lord to withdraw it out of
our reach. Such, then, are the leading disposi-
tions with which we should approach the House
of God.

Next let us consider:—

II. The disposition with which we should listen
to the Word when we are in that House.

Let us always bear in mind that the authority

SERMON of the Word preached is divine; let us remember

- I. it is not the word of fallible men, like ourselves, it is the Word of Him Who sends His ministers to proclaim it; they are ambassadors from Christ, and they bear a message direct from Him: can it be safe to slight the message because of the weakness, or even, if it be so, the unworthiness of the messenger? Does the genuineness and validity of a royal pardon depend upon the talent of him who brings it to the prison house? or will a sentence of condemnation to death, signed and sealed by the judge, be null and void because the gaoler who transmits it is a man of little estimation among men, and low moral character? So the Word is not less the Word of God, because it reaches your ears through mortal and fallible lips. It is still the Word of God, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear. Its real worth and weight lose nothing by passing through our hands; and the reason "why God has thus committed this treasure to earthen vessels," is, as He Himself has told us, in order that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. It is, unhappily, far more congenial to our nature to

set ourselves up as judges to criticise the form in **SERMON** which the Messiah of God is delivered to us, than **I.** to look to its substance, and receive it with a teachable and submissive spirit; to busy ourselves about the style and language of a sermon, rather than to look for the divine truths it contains, to store them up in our hearts, and strive to profit by them. We should be ready enough to condemn the folly of the man who was curious and captious in discussing the mode in which his food was dressed, while he starved in the midst of plenty, because he would not use it for the purpose of nourishment; but we are insensible to our own folly in thus trifling with the Word of God, which is the Bread of Life, and neglecting to receive and inwardly digest it, for the spiritual sustenance and growth of our souls, which must pine and perish without it. One excuse that is sometimes urged for turning a deaf ear to the preacher's voice, is that we exaggerate the language of the Bible, and make the path to Heaven more steep and difficult than God has made it. We have only to open the Word of God to enable us to contradict the charge. Is not every Christian there bidden to take up his

SERMON Cross daily, to despise the world and the things

- I. of the world, to live as a stranger and pilgrim on earth, to deny himself, to count those blessed who mourn and are afflicted? and what, I would ask, could human ingenuity add to this? What exaggeration could make this law more searching or more strict? What can be more offensive to self-love, than language such as this? In truth, the Bible itself is a far more searching preacher than any of us can ever hope to be.

First, then, it is in a teachable spirit that we should listen.

(2.) And next, in a spirit of honest application of the word to our own hearts and consciences.

It is well that we keep our eye diligently upon our own souls as we listen, and bring them into contact with the word preached; that we carefully measure ourselves by that standard, detect our own shortcomings as the preacher dwells *generally* on each fault and failing, confess them, and set ourselves steadfastly to repair what is wanting. Let us never be afraid to let the light of divine truth reach the bottom of your hearts; unless this be done, they will never be truly cleansed and purified. This

Word we know of a surety is the law by which we **SERMON**
must be judged at the last day. Let us try and **I**
examine ourselves beforehand by its unbending rule;
judge ourselves now, that we may not then be
judged of the Lord; let us imagine ourselves alone,
and that Christ Himself is addressing us in that
message which we hear from His Ministers; imagine
that Christ has sent them to us, and to us in-
dividually, without allowing a thought to glance
aside towards some other whom we think in fault.
We are all ready to shift the burden off our own
shoulders, to see how the rebuke or the condemna-
tion suits our neighbour rather than ourselves; we
each can see plainly in another the danger of the
baseness of that conduct we blame, but cannot per-
ceive it in ourselves; we parry the blow intended for
us, at any rate, and turn it on him who is by our
side; we are hasty in judging our neighbour, while
we ought first to apply the sentence to our own
souls. For consider, after all, what is the great
end of preaching? what is the mission on which the
Word is sent? what else but the conversion of souls
to God, and the building up of souls in Christ? It
is nothing less than to destroy the power of the

SERMON devil, and to establish the reign of Christ in the heart of man. We do not gather you together in this House of God, to listen to novelties that may exercise the intellect and please the fancy, but to eternal truths, which may touch the heart, enlighten the mind, and convert the soul; that you may receive more of that illumination of the Spirit, which no human art, or talent, or device, can give. Say not within yourselves,

“ We know enough, and need be taught no more.”

On the contrary, (the path of the just is a shining Light, shining more and more unto the perfect day,) and the soul can scarcely be in a healthy state, which does not feel that growth in grace under the teaching of the Word, and in the use of the various means of grace, is one of its chief and most important functions—which has not learnt that human learning and ability will profit us nothing, if we are ignorant of the knowledge of salvation.

(3.) Lastly, we must come in a spirit of *Faith*; and if we do thus come, I am quite sure of this, that we shall love the Word preached, and the truth proclaimed, apart from the talents or the eloquence of him who proclaims them. It is a diseased taste

which loathes all, and likes none, but highly seasoned dishes, and the richest dainties of the table ; so is it no true taste for devotion, religion which seeks rather for vain ornaments or highly wrought and cleverly rounded sentences, than for the simple and solid truths of salvation. Rather should our very respect for the Word of God, our reverence for its authority, our faith in its power, make us indifferent to the talent with which it is delivered. In truth, the Word of God is so divine, so consoling, that even in the earthen vessel it is beautiful and lovely to him who sees aright ; it is so powerful in itself, even in the hands of the weak, that it is mighty through God to cast down every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, if only we will meet it as we should do, in the spirit of a reverential faith. So pure is the water of life, that the channel through which it passes cannot corrupt it. But after all, however feeble may be our own language, is not the message we deliver always enough to confound the wicked, and console the weak ? Does it require such vast talent to pronounce that the impure and the licentious, the drunkard, the liar, the cruel and the covetous,

SERMON

I.

SERMON the malicious and the merciless, shall not enter into

I the kingdom of God? if the sinner will not repent, he must perish? that it will profit him nothing, if he gain the whole world, but lose his own soul? Or, on the other hand, could any eloquence of mine, or of the most gifted minister, add to the touching influence of the Saviour's gracious invitation, "Come to me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you?" could any laboured effort of language add ought to those solemn and most simple words, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" Is it not, I would ask, in the very simplicity of these sayings, that their force in one sense consists, and that they cannot either be less alarming to the sinner, or less consoling to the sorrowful, though not clothed in the words which man's wisdom teacheth? If we come to listen in the spirit of faith, there will be an end of all idle curiosity, or censorious cavilling at the Word preached—an end of that spirit in which the youthful Augustine, while yet a slave to sin, came to listen to the holy Ambrose. It was NOT, as he

himself confesses, to learn from the lips of that **SERMON** man of God, the secret of eternal life: "it was I. not," says he, "to seek a remedy for the inveterate diseases and the deadly wounds of my own soul; it was to carp and to criticise, it was to sharpen my own wit, and indulge the feeling of my own superiority." Thus have I endeavoured, dear Brethren, briefly to show you the chief dispositions with which each worshipper should approach the House of God that has just been dedicated for ever to His worship and service. Nor must I omit, while I refer to this happy completion of this work of love, to bid you continually thank God with all sincerity and devotion, that He has put it into the heart of His servant to raise this beautiful House to His honour, and as a benefit to yourselves, for time and eternity. And with your thanksgivings let your prayers be joined, that of His great mercy He will pour down the abundant riches of His Grace, on her who has thus sought to bestow a lasting blessing on yourselves. In conclusion, let me say, doubt not, but earnestly believe, that this is the House of God; and may you also find it to be, as Jacob did the spot on which he lay,

SERMON "the gate of Heaven." Here at any rate will

- I. He who hath the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth, according to His promise, be ever present in the Assembly of His Saints. Here hath He appointed that the Bread of Life and Water of Life shall be dispensed to all who hunger and thirst after them, by those whom He ordains to be His ministers, and the stewards of His mysteries. Here will He spread His holy table—that sacred Feast which Jesus makes—that Holy Communion of His Body and Blood which He hath given, not only that they may be our spiritual food and sustenance, but also the means of cleansing our sin-stained souls: when such benefits and blessings are here to be sought, and may here be found, you may well exclaim with holy David, "I was glad when they said unto me, I will go into the House of the Lord;" and never will you plead the ignorance of Jacob, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Rather wilt thou say, "I know Him to be here, by the answers of peace He has given to my prayers, here offered up in the Sanctuary; I know Him to be here, by the strength with which He has supported my weakness under

temptation; by the comforts with which He has SERMON
refreshed my soul, in my times of trial and tribula- I.
tion; by the light which His Holy Word, listened
to in faith, has shed abroad in my heart, through
the Holy Ghost; by the consciousness of pardon
experienced at His holy table in partaking of the
memorials of His Death and His Passion. I know
that the Lord is in His holy Temple." Let us
all, then, keep silence before Him, worship Him
here with reverence and godly fear, and praise Him
daily for those rich blessings and treasures, which
He has provided for His children, who come to
seek them in His House.

BUILDING FOR GOD.

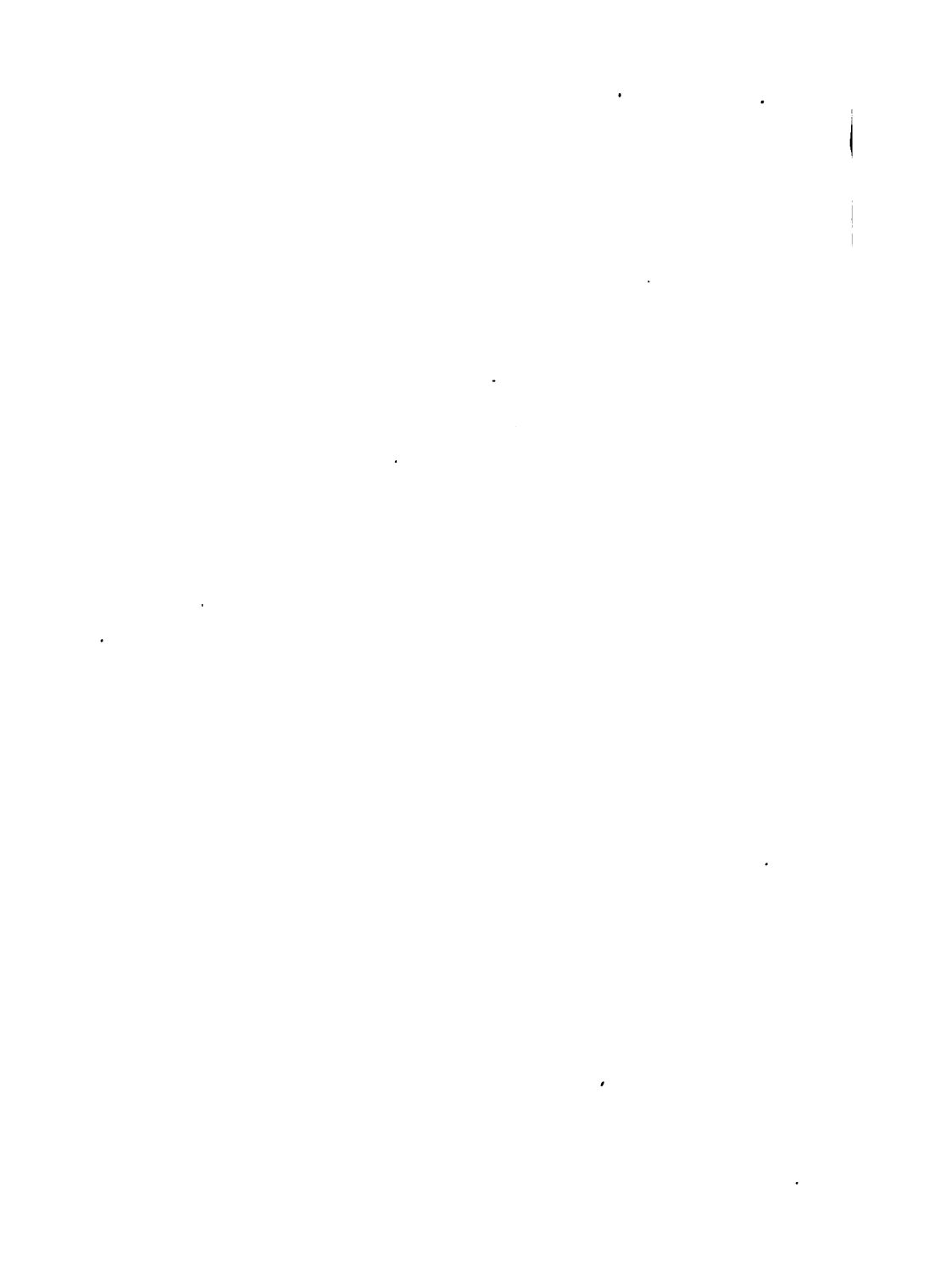
S E R M O N

BY

THE REV. FREDERICK WATKINS, M.A.,

AUGUST 21ST, 1860.

Ebening.



SERMON II.

BUILDING FOR GOD.

ACTS, VII. PART VERSE 49.

“What house will ye build Me? saith the Lord.”

THIS is no new question, Brethren, proposed for the first time by Almighty God to His creature man in these latter days in which our lot is cast on earth. It is a question almost as old as the history of man himself on this earth—a question which, if not falling on his ear in audible sound, has spoken silently but forcibly to his inmost heart, and has found an answer there in the truest and deepest convictions of his spirit. It is a question which the Invisible and Infinite God has condescended to ask in all ages of His Church—probably from those

SERMON
II.

SERMON early days of Seth, when men first began to call

- II. on the Name of the Lord; which holy men of all ages have answered not in words only, nor, it may be, by words at all, but by deeds, by doing what they could, according to the light which they had received, and the circumstances in which they were placed.

Noah answered this question, when, after his great and singular deliverance from the overwhelming waters, he “builded an altar to the Lord, and offered upon it a burnt sacrifice of every clean beast and every clean fowl,” for Almighty God accepted his offering.

And faithful Abraham answered this question, when he had reached in safety the promised land—the land promised to him and to his seed for ever. He also built an altar to the Lord, and offered there an acceptable offering.

And Jacob also—he who afterwards prevailed with God, and was named Israel because of his mighty wrestling—when on his solitary journey towards Haran, he had been favoured in a vision of the night with a direct communication from the Lord God of Abraham and the God of his father

Isaac, awaking from sleep he rose up early in the morning, and took a stone and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon it, and called the name of that place *Bethel*, or the House of God; he answered this question. II.

Such were the practical answers of the ancient patriarchs to the voice that spoke within them. Such was the obedience of what we may call their religious instinct to Him whom though invisible they felt to be not far from each one of them. Such was their conviction that though the Almighty Being is everywhere present, though "His eyes are over the righteous and His ears open to their prayers," yet that it is His good will to be worshipped in a peculiar manner, and to appoint especial places where His Name should dwell.

But perhaps some one will say that such simple edifices as these—the altar, the pillar, or the heap of stones, cannot be called Houses of God—that they were too insignificant in size, too poor in material, and too plain in construction, to deserve so great a name. Such an objector would probably turn to a later age of the Jewish Church, and point to the Tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, to

SERMON the first glorious Temple at Jerusalem, or to the

- II. second Temple, still more glorious in true glory—and say that these were houses of God, and in a certain sense and to a certain extent, worthy of Him in whose honour they were raised, and for whose service they were intended. To such an objection as this it might be sufficient to answer that there is really no measure of great and little before the Infinite Being, there is no question of costly and poor, no comparison of glorious and base. If, in the true language of the Jewish King, “the Heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain” Almighty God, how much less can any house that man may build? If, as is declared by the Prophet, “Heaven be His throne and Earth His footstool,” what dwelling shall man raise for Him—what place of rest shall he prepare?

No, Brethren, we believe that He accepted the Tabernacle as His House because it was built by Moses in simple obedience to the instructions which he had received from God Himself according to the pattern given to him in the Mount. It was that pattern which was to serve in some degree as a type to all future Houses of God on earth, and has

in fact so served to the present day. We believe **SERMON**
that He accepted it because the people and the **II.**
princes of the congregation willingly offered of
their substance, of their best and most precious
things, towards the erection, the speedy and perfect
completion, of that moveable House, in which,
whilst His people dwelt in tents, the Lord God
was pleased to move amongst them. Thus they
also practically answered the question of the text.
Thus David also answered it in will, if not in deed,
when he purposed so deeply in his heart to build
a House for the Lord his God—a house which he
intended to be “exceeding magnifical;” and when
the feelings with which he was animated burst forth
from him in the humble but hearty cry, “Who am
I, and what is my people, that we should be able to
offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come
of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.”
Thus Solomon also, when in his unearthly wisdom
and love, he built the House for God, which
his father David had so long contemplated, and for
which he had made such large provision of money
and of all fitting material, practically answered the
question which God had put into his heart.

SERMON And as was the case in the Jewish Church, so

II. has it been also in the Church of Christ. The same great question has continually been proposed by Almighty God, and answered by faithful man—"What house will ye build Me?" It was a question which, in the early ages of the Christian Church, men were unable to answer practically, for they had little power of showing their zeal for God's service by erecting houses to His honour. They met to worship Him in the small upper room—in the retired spot by the river side "where prayer was wont to be made"—in private houses, where, as we read, "many were gathered together praying"—in places of assembly, where the doors were locked for fear of the Jews—in schools given up to them by their teachers—and, in times of persecution, in wild caves and dark catacombs. In later days, when persecution had ceased, when men were able to act, as well as willing to suffer, for Christ's sake, many of those venerable churches were built—not unfrequently by the energy and self-denial of a single individual—which proved how anxious faithful men then were to answer the question which in all ages of the Church had been speaking

to men's hearts, "What house will ye build Me? SERMON
saith the Lord." II.

Thus, brethren, it has happened under His good Providence that the same important question has been asked at this day in this place. How it has been practically answered it is hardly necessary for me to say here. I look around me, and rejoice. I rejoice both that it hath pleased Him "from whom come all holy desires and all good counsels," to put them into the heart of a Christian woman, and that He hath still further been pleased to bring them all to good effect. Of this House itself, of its beauty, its richness, of its fitness for its great and holy object, you, who see, can judge for yourselves. You can judge of the motive of the doer of this good work by the way in which it is done. You can imagine something of her feeling towards God of humble, hearty desire for His worship, which has caused her to build this House for His public service. You can enter into her feeling for her fellow-creatures—for you especially amongst whom by God's Providence she has been placed—in providing such a church for you—such a home in this world's wilderness—such a resting-place for your

SERMON weary feet—such a place of refreshment for your

II. hungering and thirsting souls. For this work of humble faith and Christian love may Almighty God reward her, for His dear Son's sake. Surely in this good work she has done her duty; she has done, like the loving and faithful Mary, "what she could."

Let me, therefore, brethren, say a word to you, who are to form the regular congregation of this church, as to your duty—what is expected from you—what in the great day of account will be required from you. I need hardly remind you that this building is but the outward body, comely indeed but lifeless—consecrated indeed, and "separated from all worldly and profane uses," but without you voiceless, heartless, spiritless. You are the soul which is to animate this body—you—not indeed of yourselves, but as members of the Lord Jesus Christ, redeemed by His most precious Blood, animated by His most gracious and life-giving Spirit—you are to be the life, the voice, the soul, of this Body which has been so wisely and so liberally prepared for you.

It is at all times a solemn responsibility to form one of a Christian congregation, amongst whom,

when they are gathered together in His Holy Name, **SERMON**
the Lord Jesus Christ has not only promised to be **II.**
present, but also to grant their requests. It is a
solemn thought to consider, as in the public worship
of God a Christian man ought always to consider,
that he is then one of a Body—a Body consisting
of many members; and that by his conduct in the
congregation, by his indifference, or listlessness, or
inattention, or, on the other hand, by his earnest-
ness, by the truth and warmth of his devotion, he
may act most powerfully and permanently for good
or for evil upon those by whom he is surrounded.
Thus, in public worship, a man must always affect
the eternal interests of others, as well as the state of
his own undying soul.

But you, Brethren, have an additional responsi-
bility laid on you. From it, as is the case in
all Providential arrangements, you have no escape.
You must accept it. You are the first congregation
of this New Church. You are like the first colonists
of a new country. You will impress your character
on many generations to come. Your descendants
will, in this house, in many of their features, resemble
you. For you know, Brethren, that a congregation

SERMON once formed, does not all pass away at once, falling

- II. like the yearly harvest at one and the same time under the sickle of the reaper. The changes which it undergoes are gradual, almost imperceptible. Here one, and there another, is removed by the hand of death, or by some other of the many "changes and chances of this mortal life," and others are raised up to fill their places; and all the while the body seems to remain the same, and retains the same outward appearance, and much of the same inward character. Such indeed is the law of its existence; and everyone who has had any experience in the ministry of Christ's Church, is able to tell what the character is of a congregation to whom he is ministering. He can tell almost at a glance whether the character of its members is one of earnest attention and of simple devotion to the objects for which they have met together, or of heedlessness and inattention, and practical forgetfulness both of where they then are, and what they are then doing. "What house will ye build Me? saith the Lord." This is His question to a Christian congregation as truly and even more searchingly than His question about the external fabric. For, Brethren, there may be beauty

and splendour in the one, without truth or earnest-
ness in the other. There may be so-called Christian
Churches, like the whited sepulchres of Judæa—
beautiful indeed without, but within filled with all
uncleanness. They may outwardly, but not in-
wardly, be fitted for His service after whose Name
they are called; whilst the true Church of Christ,
the great king's daughter described by the royal
Psalmist, is spoken of as "all glorious within," as
well as arrayed in clothing of wrought gold.

Let me, Brethren, in conclusion, point out to you
that there is yet another sense in which the words
of the text may be taken, nay, must be taken by
each one of us, as individual Christians, as single
though not separate members of the mystical Body
of the Lord Jesus Christ. "What house will you
build Me?" This is the question of the heart-
seeing God to each one of us. It does not refer
to houses built with hands, to altars, or pillars, to
synagogues, or temples, or churches, however costly
or however glorious. Nor does it direct our atten-
tion to the great congregation of Christ's people
assembled in His House of prayer, nor to any one
of the many millions of human beings now on earth,

SERMON

II.

SERMON except one, and that is oneself—yourself as He

II. speaks to each one of you, myself as He speaks to me. He condescends to say to each one of us, "What house will you build Me?" He has given to each one of us building power, wisdom to design, skill and strength to finish a house. It is a house not made with hands. It is a house not planned by any mortal architect; and not a house only, but a temple, even the fleshly body in which "we live, and move, and have our being" here on earth. "Know ye not," says the inspired Apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" But how can we be said, Brethren, to build these bodies which He in His mercy and love builds for us—bodies so wonderful that nothing but Infinite Wisdom could design them, or Almighty Power bring them to perfection and keep them in safety? In this wonderful work, as in many other parts of our complex existence, we are workers together with Almighty God. He does not need, but He is pleased to allow, our assistance. He builds the human body. He gives it life, and sets, as it were, in motion all its strange and admirable machinery. He informs it with a living soul, and then the

fabric is complete. Thus complete, it is put, so **SERMON**
to speak, into our hands. It is left to our action. II.

It is subject to our will, influenced by it for good or for evil. Day by day, year after year, we are at work upon it. We are indeed building the house every moment of our lives, adding somewhat to it, or taking something from it, either enriching its beauty, and increasing its fitness for its great object, or woe unto us! disfiguring the handywork of the All-wise Builder, effacing the impress of His Divine Intelligence, and, as far as we can, destroying the temple which He has made.

How then shall we, each one for ourselves and by ourselves, answer the question which God puts to us? Or rather, for it is a question of the present moment—one that is now asked, but may perhaps never be asked again—how are we answering it? What does the voice of conscience say? What is it whispering to us in that still small voice which no fellow-creature can hear, but which always enters into the ears of the Lord God Almighty? Perhaps the safest answer that any of us can make to the question, "What house will you build Me?" is the answer to another question, "What house have you

SERMON already built for Him?" Or, dropping the strong

II. but plain figure used in the text, if we would rightly judge what our lives will henceforth be in the sight of Almighty God, let us see carefully what they have already been. If we have hitherto lived in sin unrepented of, not fought against, oh, let us strive and pray that we may have the grace of penitence, that we may have light to see the danger of the path in which we are walking, and strength to flee from it. And if, on the other hand, we have hitherto been kept from a sinful course of life, if we have in any degree been enabled by the help of His most Holy Spirit "to keep ourselves unspotted from the world," then we may humbly hope and also heartily pray that "He Who hath begun a good work in us will continue it to the end." Then, "when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved," He will provide us with "a building of God, a House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

DECAY AND RESTORATION.

S E R M O N

BY

THE REV. DOLBEN PAUL, B.A.,

AUGUST 26TH, 1860.

Morning.

SERMON III.

DECAY AND RESTORATION.

1 KINGS, XVIII. PART 30TH VERSE.

“And he repaired the Altar of the Lord, that was broken down.”

THERE are certain times and certain seasons, SERMON
Brethren, appointed by Nature's God for Nature's III.
decay and Nature's restoration to life. We are
now in the enjoyment of one of the latter seasons.
Everything around us is instinct with life and
health. Winter's night and spring's morning have
ushered in the full noon of summer. The year has
grown day by day and hour by hour, and is now in
the glory and strength of its manhood. And this
is not without its effect on ourselves. We rejoice,
and perhaps more so than usual this year, after the
constant rain, in the warm sunshine of to-day, and

SERMON in the soft breeze. Our hearts and spirits seem

III. the better and warmer—they sympathize with the brightness and gladness of the outer world. But these things cannot last long. A few days, and the leaves will be gradually falling one by one, in “calm decay,” to live again no more. The sun, too, will lose some of its power and heat, and the winds will get colder and colder; and this year will follow so many of its forefathers to the grave, buried with all its joys and sorrows till the Judgment Day. But though the year shall ere long die, Nature dieth not: with the new year will come new buds and new flowers, new hopes and new wishes. Nature’s altar, which had been broken down, and left in decay for a season, will be repaired and restored; and Nature herself will live and rejoice again. She will again offer of her very best to worship the Lord her God, and praise *His* holy Name, Who gave her these lovely and beautiful things wherewith to magnify Him and rejoice before Him. Yes, Nature has her season of restoration; the altar of Nature’s God is year by year repaired, that she may offer upon it her most precious treasures, her choicest gifts, to Him from whom she has received them all.

And *we* too, Brethren, have our seasons of decay SERMON
and renewal. I don't speak now of *bodily* decay; III.
for oftentimes, thank God, the times of greatest bodily
weakness and suffering are the times of greatest
spiritual strength and inward joy and heartsease.
No; I mean that we have times when the altar of
God within us, the strength of our soul, is broken
down; when the strong hand of sin has laid hold
of its stones and torn them away, maybe to build
some idolatrous altar of its own; when with impious
hand, like Belshazzar, it has snatched the golden
and silver vessels of the temple dedicated to God,
and applied them to its own foul uses; when it has
seized the best gifts of God to the soul or body,
and turned them to that soul or body's destruction.
Then it is that the altar of the Lord within us,
Brethren, is indeed broken down; then is indeed
the season of the soul's decay and ruin.

And as it is with individuals, so is it also with na-
tions. The children of Israel, who had been chosen
by God for His own peculiar people, among whom
He had shown signs and wonders, in Egypt and in
the wilderness; whom He had borne with for so
many years, even though they had openly rebelled

SERMON against Him, and had preferred a king of their

III. own, when the Lord their God was their King—the children of Israel were now in the midst of one of these seasons of spiritual decay. True, it was perhaps more the fault of their wicked king, Ahab, and his still more wicked wife, Jezebel; of whom we read that “Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him: whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” But doubtless almost the whole people were no unwilling followers of their sins. For when God inquired of Elijah, “What doest thou here?” why art thou fled from the people to whom I sent thee?—what was the prophet’s answer? “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for the *children of Israel* have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine Altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword.” Yes; all God’s gracious dealings with them were forgotten, all His warnings neglected, His power set at nought, and His Altar broken down, and perhaps its very stones taken away to build an altar to an idol of their own making, even Baal. Yet sad as it must have been for God’s prophets, and for those seven thousand souls who had not bowed

the knee to Baal, to see the stones once dedicated to God's holy and pure service, now defiled by the pollution of an idolatrous worship; sadder far must it have been to see the living buildings—the hearts of the people—of which it was but a type, given over wholly to idolatry. For the altar of God that lay in ruins on the top of Carmel was but a sign, alas! of the ruined state of the people's souls. And how mournfully must Elijah have recalled those prophetic words—almost the dying words—of Moses, concerning that people whom he had loved and led so long. “I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the works of your own hands.”

But a time of restoration was at hand—one of those times that God so graciously gives His people, though they be a backsliding and rebellious people. He would now appeal once more to His children, whom He still yearned after for their fathers' sake; He would see if they would even now turn aside and consider their ways, and turn unto the Lord

SERMON

III.

SERMON their God. And His prophet, whom He had once
III. sent to announce His judgment upon them for their sins—to wit, the three years famine—was now to be the one to work their restoration.

On the heights of Carmel were gathered the forces of Baal—his four hundred and fifty prophets, and the four hundred prophets of the grove. There they stood, proud in the support and favour of the sovereign of the land, and in the presence of the mighty multitude whom they had deceived. And over against them stood the single champion of the Lord of Hosts—the poor, persecuted, despised Elijah. And this one prophet of the Most High came unto all the people, and said, “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people answered not, for they feared the king. But when he proposed that the God that answered by fire should be God, they could not but accept the challenge; they could not help exclaiming, “It is well spoken.” Then, as you know, Brethren, in vain from morning to noon did the false prophets call, “O Baal, hear us!” There was no voice, nor any that answered. But while the

crowds stood still in heartless awe, God's champion **SERMON**
spake unto all the people, and said, "Come near **III.**
unto me. And all the people came near unto him.
And he repaired the Altar of God that was broken
down." And he made a trench about the Altar,
and put the wood in order, and cut the bullock
in pieces, and laid him on the wood; and had
four barrels of water poured three times over it
all. And at the time of the offering of the evening
sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said,
"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let
it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel,
and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done
all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord,
hear me; that this people may know that Thou art
the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their
heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell,
and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood, and the
stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that
was in the trench. And when all the people saw it,
they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord,
He is the God! the Lord, He is the God!" And
oh! had they but ever remembered this day—had
they cherished and fanned the spark of zeal for

SERMON God's honour which was now fresh lighted in their

III. hearts, till it became a steady enduring flame of constant love—they had never seen that dreadful day when they were carried away captive into a distant land; when the cup of the Lord's anger overflowed, and being very angry with Israel, He removed them out of His sight.

And now, dear Brethren, let not this lesson be thrown away upon you, who are keeping your first solemn Sunday services in your beautiful Parish Church. You, like the Jews of old, have now been chosen for a peculiar people; you have once received what they never received—the grace of God's Holy Spirit, to enable you to serve Him faithfully and truly. But alas! all of us have oft-times resisted that grace, and rebelled against our God. Our heart's altar, upon which we should have sacrificed the best powers of our soul and body to His service, has many a time, I fear, been broken down, and its stones used in the service of His and our enemy. Is it not so? Just for a few moments lift the veil of self-deceit, draw aside the curtain which hides that altar of your heart—that which should be the Holy of Holies—from

others' eyes, and alas! too often from your own; SERMON
and see how ruined it is! Its stones are loose; III.
weeds have grown wildly over it; it has been un-
cared for; the Spirit's flame has not been kept
burning upon it. Compare your lives as they are
and have been, with what they ought to have been.
Look back for the last year, and view your daily
lives and conversations. Have there been no evil
words bandied about? Has God's Name, of which
He said, Holy and reverend is It, never passed
your lips, not only idly and carelessly, but even
profanely? and when it has been so, have you
always been careful to ask God's pardon in your
prayers? Remember, Brethren, what we are all in
this unreal world so apt to forget, the *reality* of
your religion: remember that your baptism was a
real baptism; that the grace of the Spirit then
given you was a *real* grace—a *real* help, if you
will only use it: remember that your promise to
renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp
and glory of the world, and the carnal desires of the
flesh, was a most *real* promise. And now look at
St. Paul's list of those works of the flesh, which you
then so solemnly declared you would renounce:—

SERMON "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

III. idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, *drunkenness*, revellings, and such like. Does any one of you plead guilty to any of these charges? nay, rather, Brethren, must we not all plead guilty to some—if not in deed, at least in word or in thought? Our altar has been broken down; it has been defiled; it has not, even with the best of us, been kept polished and pure; the flame of God's Spirit has not always burned brightly upon it, shedding its light *on* us and *around* us, on ourselves and our neighbours. O Brethren, would that I could bring home more closely to each one among you, how much we do daily and hourly pollute the altar of God within us; how daily and hourly we need the lifting up of the heart to God in prayer—that He would pardon *us*, and cleanse and purify *it*—that He would wash away the stains on it with His Son's most precious Blood—and that He would re-unite its stones by His one and one making Spirit. When we find a holy Apostle—whose whole life was one continual course of self-denial and obedience, of prayer and praise—fearing

lest *he* should be a cast-away; and then look at our-
selves, our blindness of faith, our weakness of trust,
our selfishness, our sinful tempers venting themselves
in angry words and in unjust thoughts of others—
when we see our utter carelessness of any self-con-
trol or self-restraint, our eye-service as men-pleasers,
our lip-service here in God's house—oh! how over-
whelmed must we be with fear for our salvation!

SERMON

III.

Dear Brethren, *I* do not stand here to judge
or condemn any one of you; but do not your own
hearts condemn you? and if your heart condemn
you, God is greater than your heart, and knoweth
all things. *He* has witnessed your sins, *His* eye has
seen the most secret thoughts and desires of your
hearts, and *His* hand has noted them in that book
by which you will be judged.

With many of you I trust that same eye has also
witnessed the tears of sorrow and of shame—that
same hand has noted down the groaning of your
burdened soul. But, oh! if there be any here who
have hitherto gone on your ways sinning as you like,
allowing Satan's hand to pull away stone after stone
from God's altar; to harden more and more your
hearts to a sense of shame for your grievous sins;

SERMON oh, now at least there is a pause, now there is a
III. call to you from God Himself, such as you perhaps
have never had before, and may never have again.

Brethren, though a stranger among you, I am thankful to have been permitted to witness and join in the solemn dedication of this beautiful building to the service of God. And I would fain say a few words to you on this subject, now so fresh on all our minds. Whatever excuse you may have had hitherto for not attending the public services of the Church, of which you are members, now you can have *none*. The ark of God has visibly taken up its abode among you—the earnest and type of your Saviour’s invisible Presence. You can hardly go two steps from your cottage door without seeing the spire of your Parish Church, pointing as with uplifted finger to Him, to whose worship it is set apart; while your own bells, like angels’ voices, call you, as they did this morning, to hasten with glad footsteps to the House of the Lord. And when you are once within these walls, every object about you is fitted to call away your thoughts from the cares and concerns of your daily life, to a higher and holier frame of mind. For all the beautiful ornaments, so well adapted to

the house where God's honour deigns to dwell, are, SERMON
if I may so speak, so many sacraments, so many III.
outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual
things. They tell you of the need you have of
beautifying and adorning the temple of God within
you—your own heart—with the Christian graces,
with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which
is in the sight of God of great price. Thus you will
see in yonder font and its consecrated water the
beauty of inward purity, and in the pelican feeding
her young from her own flesh, the love which
Christ bears to you, feeding you, as He does, with
His Word, and more especially with His own Flesh
and Blood in that sacred Feast, to which you are
even now bidden. Again: simple and massive as
this pulpit is, it is but a type of the grand sim-
plicity of the Gospel which is preached from it.
And as the sun's rays pour through the chancel
windows in streams of coloured light, so do the
bright beams of Christian truth take different hues,
as they pass through the various characters of
Christian manhood and womanhood.

And, dear Brethren, faint not, I beseech you, in
the work which your Parish Church calls on you to

SERMON take in hand—the work of inward restoration and
III. renewal. This beautiful building, as you know, required many days, much skill, much patience, and many different handicrafts, ere it was perfected. And we too must bestow unceasing labour, and use all the various means of grace here offered to us, before the temple within us can be said to be thoroughly consecrated to His service. Yet faint not and fear not, but go forth in good hope, that by constant prayerfulness and watchfulness, each heart will daily grow in grace, and be made a fitter habitation for the blessed Spirit. Such a day as Tuesday last—the Consecration day of your Parish Church, built for you by one whom you have all long known and loved, and who has thus shown her love for you, and her care for your highest interests—you will never see again. But when of this goodly building there stands not one stone upon another—when this material temple, with all its beautiful and costly ornaments, shall no longer exist—then will be the lifting up of the everlasting doors; then will be the opening of the Church of the First-born above; then will be the procession of saints and servants of God, in robes of spotless white, with

palms in their hands. And the glory and honour SERMON
of the nations shall enter into it; and the voices III.
of a great multitude, which no man can number,
shall rise as the voice of many waters, and as the
voice of mighty thunderings, and shall cease not
day nor night, singing, "Alleluia, Alleluia, for the
Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

God grant of His great love, dear Brethren, that
all who have joined in the Consecration Services of
this church, may meet among those blessed souls,
who shall unite in singing that song for ever and
ever. *Amen.*

CHRIST THE SHEPHERD OF THE FLOCK.

S E R M O N

BY

THE REV. F. DIGBY LEGARD, B.A.,
INCUMBENT.

AUGUST 26TH, 1860.

Ebening.



SERMON IV.

CHRIST THE SHEPHERD OF THE FLOCK.

JEREMIAH, XIII. 20.

“Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?”

THE Old Testament is generally looked upon as **SERMON**
a book of stern laws, and a history of righteous **IV.**
indignation, where the wrath of God is specially
declared against sinners, and His Almighty arm
bared in judgment. Yet even there, anger is by
no means the universal expression of feeling towards
them. Many verses of the prophets there are,
which to human ears are most touching in their
appeals.

“Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for
the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and

SERMON brought up children, and they have rebelled against

IV. Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider. O Israel, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for thy goodness is as the morning cloud, and like the early dew it hath gone away." And so in the words of the text, by the mouth of Jeremiah, God is asking of the leaders and captains of His people in bitter expostulation, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?"

But perhaps the words seem more appropriate to the spirit of the New Testament—the tender love of Christ for His people is so constantly set forth under the image of a shepherd's care for his sheep. Our Saviour delights to call Himself by that name, and to speak of Himself in the various duties and offices which a shepherd performs to his sheep. "I am the *good* Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep; My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

The *good* Shepherd; not a robber, for He hath, instead of taking from us, given us gifts—given us

Himself, His life, given us life and immortality, an **SERMON**
undying crown in Heaven. IV.

Nor is He a hireling. His pay was agony and bloody sweat, and mockery and the cruel cross, and a lingering death. No, He was no hireling. There are false shepherds pretending to come from Him, but they lead the sheep wrongly, entering in not by the appointed door, but climbing up some other way. He has proved Himself *the good one*, by laying down His Life for His sheep. These false ones have never done so; in prosperous easy times perhaps they have watched and cared for the flock, but "when the wolf cometh," directly there is any danger or trouble or hardship, they flee away. Such is the endearing tie, which binds us to our Great Shepherd. He Who has suffered and died for His flock, He was once one of us; He took our form, He became in fact one of the sheep. Once the Lamb, now the Shepherd; once the Lamb who was led to the slaughter, and "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" to utter one word of reproach or complaint.

And yet we can hardly enter into the full force and tenderness of the image of Shepherd, which

SERMON Christ our Saviour is pleased to bear. In this

IV. land of enclosures and hedges and trim fields, we cannot understand the amount of care necessary in those eastern countries to protect the sheep from harm. The relation which grew up between shepherd and sheep there was one of closest sympathy and almost friendship—on him depended all their sustenance; he led them forth, and brought them home. Imagine what a lonely Syrian shepherd must have felt towards his dumb charge, so entirely dependent on him, as he tended them on the mountain side, or on the skirts of the wilderness, far from human habitation. Many a clear starry night, David, the shepherd king, doubtless watched his flock, and listened to the deep baying of the wolves, and the growling of the hungry bears, as they prowled around, or crashed through the underwood of the dark thick forests which were near. Many a time his watchful eye and ready hand had served him to drive off the lion that came to prey upon his lambs.

First of all, as they have no hedges or divided fields like ours, the shepherds were obliged to lead their sheep out themselves into the green pastures,

perhaps through a wilderness, or a desert, or thicket, **SERMON**
and had to stay with them and watch them, and **IV.**
find out the best and richest grass for them.

And then, Secondly, they had to lead them carefully home, not hurrying the young and tender ones; and then put them in the fold, and number them each night to see if any were missing.

And, Thirdly, if any were missing, the shepherd had to leave the rest behind, and go and search for that lost one until he found it—perhaps wearied and tired with rambling, or torn by brambles and thorns; and so he would carry it back on his shoulders rejoicing.

Here are three points in which Christ resembles the shepherd. Thus it is He would guide and feed us on earth—leading us by the waters of comfort—safely piloting us through the wilderness of this world—watching, oh, how carefully! lest the wolf, the wolf perhaps in sheep's clothing, should draw us off into wandering ways. For we too often are like erring and straying sheep—we get lost and tangled by temptations—we have trusted too much to our own powers of keeping straight, and have fancied we have seen clearer and better paths elsewhere—

SERMON or we edge off from our fellow-men, and think

IV. that they are not spiritual minded as we are; and we leave the good old ways, and thus are in danger of being lost.

And so, secondly, the image of the careful shepherd numbering his sheep, is what we may very rightly fancy our Lord doing to us. Each night, ere we lie down, should we say to ourselves, Christ has been watching, marking me; have I been one of His sheep to-day? am I numbered among His flock? And so of course the idea of being numbered by Him, gains greater depth, the nearer we approach the end of this life, the closer we come to our everlasting home—that blessed home, to which Christ would bring us all; more and more serious becomes the question we should put to ourselves, Am *I* following my Redeemer to that home? or am I making my home here on earth?

But most closely of all does the life of a shepherd represent the office of our Saviour, when He goes out to *search* for His lost sheep.

For there we see that tender love, which would not that any of us should perish; that anxious eye which marks even the absence of one out of

a hundred, as well as out of thousands; the jealous **SERMON** care, when one is missing, *to go after, to send* IV. after him, to fetch him home again—by crosses, by trials, by showing the vanity of the world, by taking away earthly props and supports, to make him lean only on a heavenly arm. It is the great love of Christ to us that makes Him rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, that makes Him send ministers to recall and rebuke men. Brethren, we cannot fathom, we cannot understand, that love; only let us humbly adore and reverence His infinite unfailing compassion, of which we are so unworthy, and let us pray and on our knees entreat Him that we may not be lost, but that He will still help and succour us, and that we may still be among the number of His flock, "*His beautiful flock.*"

But if Christ is the Great and the Good Shepherd, there are others under Him whom He has appointed to guide and feed His sheep on earth. I pass on, then, to consider our duties, and the relation of a minister to his people.

"Feed My flock—feed My lambs," said Jesus to His Apostles, just before He left them; and the

SERMON divine commission has passed on from them to their

IV. successors. Ever since that day there have been messengers, more or less faithful, more or less devoted, praying men to be reconciled to God—penetrating into the dens of vice, into prisons; visiting the sick and the sorrowful—bringing before men, in palace and in market-place, in the busy thronging streets and in the peaceful cottage homes, thoughts of another world than this, messages from a Father to His children, tidings of a Saviour's free and full pardon to all repentant sinners, promises of rest and peace in an eternal kingdom.

“Take heed,” says St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus, “to yourselves, and to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” A weighty responsibility is indeed laid upon us, ever since the time when we first were set aside for this office. Then the solemn question was put to each of us, “Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and administration?” and we answered, before God and the congregation, “I trust I do,” thus declaring

that we would be no hireling pastors, that it was **SERMON**
not for place or honour or money that we under- **IV.**
took this office, but with the highest and holiest
motives of winning many to righteousness.

And this, believe me, is my single and only
reason of coming here. Thenceforth it is my duty
and my greatest happiness to give up my time and
best pains and energies to sowing the seeds of the
Eternal Word of God.

As, then, we are ambassadors of Christ, so also
remember that we are your *ministers*. As our
chiefest object is to raise before you Christ cruci-
fied, to bring you to the Cross, to speak to you
in the Saviour's name—so our office is to *serve*
you. It sometimes unfortunately happens that a
wrong idea of a clergyman's duty gets about
among his people, and they talk of him, if he
visits them at their homes, as a kind and good-
natured gentleman; let me now, at the *beginning*
of these services, and our life as a new parish,
teach you better. It is no mark of good nature
or kind heart to come to visit you; it is our
bounden *duty*; you have a *right* to our services.
Remember that. Let no scruple of intruding upon

SERMON our time or business hinder you from sending for

IV. your minister, when you need him, at *any hour of the day or night*; his time is yours. In season, and out of season, are we ready to minister to you. To the sick, to the aged, to those in sorrow, in trouble, or poverty, we strive to do our best, and pray that we may better be enabled to bring comfort, or at least sympathy, to them—that we may whisper to the departing spirit the assurance of God's boundless love, and to the poverty-stricken and the mourner tell of a home where there shall be no more mourning, no more weary wanderings, but tears shall be wiped away, and rest and peace be given for ever.

There are, we well know, other occasions when we have to speak; when we have to rouse the careless and indifferent—to try and kindle the spark of spiritual life in some who are growing cold-hearted and hardened—to reprove, in our Master's name, the wilful transgressor of the Divine Law. And oh, how difficult this is to do as it should be! we who are but human called upon for a task which is almost above humanity! It is then that we feel how much easier it is to preach

than to practise ; and in deep humility we are bound to own that while speaking of and alluding to the faults of others, either in this holy place or in the privacy of their own homes, our hearts have not been always right, nor our hands always pure. SERMON IV.

Christian Brethren, do not then judge us hardly, or quickly ; in your charity make allowances ; and especially look beyond us, as we most sincerely desire you would—beyond us, the instruments, to Him Whose servants we are. St. Paul thanked God because his converts “had received the Word of God, which ye have heard of us, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe.”

Come, then, in this spirit to the house of God, where public prayer is wont to be made, where you may join your brethren with heart and voice. And when God's Word is expounded to you, do not take it as critical or captious hearers, weighing and pulling to pieces each expression, or prejudiced beforehand with particular words and phrases of your own. How sad and deplorable is the result in such a case ! not only is all possible benefit

SERMON to people's own souls thrown away, but parties

IV. are formed in the Church, one minister is set up against another, a personal following is created, and most serious obstacles to the spread of true and hearty religion are formed by those who ought all to be seeking the same object, and helping one another on the same way.

“Take heed how ye hear.” And First of all, with Christian reverence and fear. If you desire your worship, your prayers, your hearing, to be blessed, endeavour to realize where and in Whose Presence you are. There are those who treat this as a common place of assembling, not different from any other house or home; who are weary and listless, if not indifferent and irreverent. If you really believe that Christ's word is true, when He has said that “where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them”—if you really believed that Christ Jesus was here—you *cannot*, you *dare* not laugh and talk, and mock the majesty of God by trampling on His holiest rites, and disturbing the devotions of your neighbours.

But, Secondly, let *the love of God* occupy your

thoughts and inspire your prayers. What I mean SERMON
is this :—We make ourselves cold by letting IV.
human affections, and apparently innocent interests,
usurp and take up our minds ; we sow tares, and
expect to reap wheat. There are those who never
realize this—that they have been fretted and irri-
tated, that they have trifled away their energies,
and put out their own light, and created their
own difficulties, by allowing hopes and plans,
thoughts and labours, to be concentrated on some
cherished earthly object ; they have been so eager
and anxious about attaining this, that there has
been no room for heavenly light ; and so they
have chilled within them the love of God. There
may have been no wilful sin, no great apparent
evil, no neglect of plain duty ; but the heart is
cold, and religion is numbed, and God holds but
the second place in their thoughts. Nay, dear
Brethren, this must not be : we must think of
God as He is, supreme in majesty and power, and
the object of our humblest adoration ; but also as
our Father and Friend, Who would draw us
nearer to Him day by day, and Who loves us
with undying love. Let Him be the centre of

SERMON our hearts; let Him be first there, then gradually

IV. He will be the chief thing we care for; "and human love will brighten and hallow earth, but will never rob us of Heaven."

I cannot let this special occasion pass without some allusion to it. Now that the gay throng of friends and visitors has dispersed, it seems more appropriate that I should address you, my people, on this first Sunday of our new church. I have let other eloquent lips speak to you about this house and its beauty and its fitness, and I want now to add a few words of individual warning, and appeal to your deepest feelings. This week has been a *most* happy and holy one; we have seen another beautiful building devoted for ever to the worship of God; we have witnessed overflowing congregations flocking together to thank God for His especial mercies, in first prompting and then concluding this noble work. And now the excitement is over, the words of consecration and blessing have been spoken, the voice of the preachers has died away on our ears, and once more are we left quietly to resume the ordinary duties of our every-day life; and yet our part is

not over, it is only begun. More solemnly than **SERMON**
ever are you called to hearty devotion, and to a **IV.**
sincerely religious life—are you bound as a parish
of Christian brethren, to live in forbearance and
charity and good-will, and to make your worship
worthy of this place.

More solemnly, if possible, than before, am I
bound to you as your minister—to the difficult
and dangerous task of practising as well as preach-
ing; like the builders of Jerusalem, who had with
one hand to go on building the walls of the
Temple, and with the other to grasp a weapon of
defence. It is a most awful thought to have souls
committed to our charge—to remember that all the
faces that I now behold, must one day be changed
by the mighty working of God's power into an
eternal fashion fit for the eternal light of His
glorious kingdom, or for the place of devils; and
that all these souls will be judged at the last day
singly, by himself, to answer for every deed done
in the body, for every word of advice acted upon
or neglected—and that our influence, our care, tells
upon them. It is a fearful but a blessed task. We
must not, however, be content with speaking here,

SERMON but must seek out our people in their own homes ;

- IV. not merely *send* them crumbs from our Master's table, as the rich man did to Lazarus, but go and carry them ourselves. To you then, my parishioners, who live in this village, let me repeat, in the plainest language, what I have already said : Never delay to send for your minister ; do not put off telling him of a sickness. It is, I know, often meant in kindness, fearing to trouble him ; but let me assure you it is a mistaken kindness.

Can anything be a trouble which has to do with a precious soul ? Can anything be so anxious and heartfelt a matter to us as to rouse you to a sense of your responsibility, and your need of salvation ? Oh, believe me, that is our one object, to secure that, to win you to turn your thoughts to that. The mists may soon be upon us ; the beating of the surge on the everlasting shores may soon be heard : who can say that he is ready ?

But to-day, as well as Tuesday last, may well be a memorable day in our annals. For to-day we have been celebrating the two Sacraments of our Church ; in the morning that holiest rite, which is the privilege of all who are full members

of our society—the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ in His Supper; and then this afternoon we have welcomed with prayers and thanksgiving the admission of one of the youngest of our brethren, by baptizing him in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And as I stood by that font there, I could not but recollect that on the very day (two years ago) when we were laying the foundation-stone of this building, one of the little ones of our parish was called away to her last home; and our psalm of gladness at the commencement of this church was actually the funeral knell of her childish spirit, who had gone to join the great invisible Church, the Communion of Saints. And now on this Sunday we have been receiving a new member into our number. One transplanted, another springing up. And this thought seems to remind one of the chain which links us to another world; it speaks of that brotherhood and communion which extends beyond this, even to the world of spirits.

Oh how full of meaning, then, is it that our baptismal service is performed thus publicly in the sight of all! How does “the innocent bright-

SERMON ness" of an infant's face speak to us of what we

IV. once have been, and once may be again! And as we have offered up our prayers that this little one may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning, we are led to think of our own vows—of the way in which we are bound to the service of God; and how that we too have promised to fight manfully under Christ's banner.

Our Saviour calls us His beautiful flock: let it be ours to walk in the beauty of holiness—to walk worthy of that our noble calling, in purity of heart, in humbleness and faith, and in charity with our neighbours.

And now but a few words more; to intrude for once only, matters of a more personal nature. I have shown you that Christ is our Great Shepherd, and we His flock—that He has appointed other shepherds under Him. I ask you earnestly now to add this night to your own prayers, one prayer for your minister, that he may faithfully guide and teach you, and that God's blessing may rest on his labours among you. If you can aid me in no other way, at least you can with your prayers, which will bring thus a double blessing on your-

selves and on him you pray for : and if you pray **SERMON**
faithfully, you *must* obtain. **IV.**

So that when you and I stand at last before the bar of God, and the awful question is put, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" your part may then be on the right hand with the true sheep, and that we may hear together the words of our common Lord and Master; "Come, ye blessed children of My Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

"Hear Thou from Heaven Thy dwelling-place,"
O God : and when Thou hearest, grant our prayers,
for Jesus' sake. Amen.



